

VZCZCXRO5672
PP RUEHBC RUEHKUK RUEHSL RUEHTRO
DE RUEHTC #0098 0481329
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 171329Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3782
INFO RUEHZJ/HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 000098

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/16/2020

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [IR](#) [NL](#)

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/IRAN: VIEWS ON FEBRUARY 11 EVENTS

REF: A. THE HAGUE 83

[1](#)B. THE HAGUE 25

Classified By: DCM Edwin Nolan for reasons 1.4(b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Several EU diplomats did not attend Iranian President Ahmadinejad's February 11 national day speech. The Dutch see the speech and surrounding events as a "small win for the regime" but with a "major cost" to the government in the long-term. The Dutch welcome thoughts for follow-up actions on Iran at the Human Rights Council (HRC). END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) EU DIPLOMATS ABSENT FROM SPEECH: MFA Iran desk officer Loek Ten Hagen told Post on February 16 that the Dutch ambassador declined to attend the president's speech due to Iranian remarks about enriching uranium to a 20 percent level, unfounded charges against the West concerning meddling in domestic politics, and continuing repression. The Dutch proposed sending a lower-level representative to the speech, but the GOI declined the offer, saying the decision not to send an ambassador would have "severe consequences" for bilateral relations. Britain, France, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, and Italy also chose not to attend. However, Spain's ambassador did participate. Asked about the impact of recent events on the upcoming March visit to Tehran by the Netherlands' Director for Middle East Affairs and Human Rights Ambassador (reftel B), Ten Hagen expected any discussions in Tehran to include "shouting" if the visit did go forward. Dutch Human Rights Ambassador Hamburger said he was trying for meetings with civil society but wanted to avoid risks to any participants.

[1](#)3. (C) "SMALL WIN" FOR THE REGIME: Ten Hagen did not have first-hand reporting from the speech, but described GOI actions beforehand as "huge-scale intimidation." Statements in the Iranian parliament calling for the death penalty for protestors, statements by GOI prosecutors noting severe actions against the opposition, the two executions the week before the speech, and the shutdown of email and SMS communication all supported the government's crackdown. According to Ten Hagen, however, the GOI efforts erode the regime's legitimacy. It's unclear whether the regime will want to and be able to continue with the communications restrictions and mass arrests. The upcoming cut to gas and bread subsidies will also erode support for the regime. Ten Hagen agreed with U.S. stated doubts on Iran's technical abilities to enrich uranium to a 20 per cent level, and thought Iran's leaders were "overestimating themselves" when they suggested Iran would become the major regional power.

[1](#)4. (C) NEXT STEPS AT THE HRC? Ten Hagen said his colleagues in Geneva described Iran's February 15 Universal Periodic Review at the HRC as "bloodless" -- Iran's reaction to criticisms and questions was "general" (rather than specific, angry or defensive). The Dutch are considering next steps at the HRC, including possibly a special session, or holding further discussions at the scheduled meeting in March.

LEVIN